

A message from our medical director

March 10, 2025

What You Should Know About Measles

Texas currently has its largest outbreak of Measles in more than 30 years with nearly 200 cases so far this year, including 23 children who have been hospitalized and one who has died. In light of this, I would like to share some facts about measles:

- **Symptoms:** Measles causes an infection that may first seem flu-like with fever and aches followed by conjunctivitis (“pink eye”), runny nose, and cough; the characteristic rash will appear a few days later. It is extremely contagious; it can remain airborne for up to two hours after an infected person has left the room and will infect 90% of non-immune people who are exposed to it.
- **Vaccination:** Before the first measles vaccine became available, there were about a half million reported cases in the US annually, including almost 50,000 hospitalizations, 1,000 cases of brain swelling, and around 500 deaths annually; but after the introduction of measles vaccine in 1963, new cases plummeted, and sustained transmission of measles in the U.S. stopped by the year 2000. Since then, most outbreaks have tended to occur in communities with lower immunization rates; two doses of measles vaccine are 97+% effective at preventing infection, but in areas where fewer than 90-95% of people are vaccinated, measles can still spread rapidly.
- **False Information:** One of the main reasons people choose not to vaccinate for measles is the fear of side-effects, but those fears are often amplified by inaccurate information. In 1998, Dr. Andrew Wakefield published a paper in which he famously claimed to have discovered a link between the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine and autism; his research was later proven to be fraudulent, resulting in the loss of his medical license, but sadly, the fear took root and has persisted ever since, even though further studies of millions of children have shown no link between vaccination and autism. Today, social media stirs up fears and arguments but makes it hard to know what to believe. So I want to be clear in what I say as a physician with almost 30 years of experience and with only the best interest of my patients and my community, including my family and friends, at heart.
- **Recommendation:** Measles is a terrible problem, but measles vaccine has now been studied for more than 60 years; we have the knowledge and the tools to stop the measles. I continue to strongly recommend that:
 - » Children should receive two (2) doses of the MMR vaccine – one at age 12-15 months and another one at age 4-6 years.
 - » Adults who are not immune (and who are not pregnant) should receive at least one dose of the MMR vaccine.

We always encourage personal conversations to help address your individual concerns and health history. Please schedule an appointment with your primary care provider to further discuss immunization if you or your family haven't been vaccinated for this preventable infection.



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